

I will begin by stating my belief that the dog-triggered electronic devices of the low output variety that I use are completely humane and approach 100 percent effectiveness.

I could almost agree with Simons views but I think we need a bigger picture perspective here. There are many stakeholders when dealing with problem dog behaviours that impact on the community and not merely the health of the individual dog and the happiness of the owner.

As Veterinarians, we can not afford to ignore the bigger picture. We must also be sensitive to human health and welfare issues if we are to remain effective practitioners. That is the bottom line.

I am beginning to believe that barking dogs are more of a problem in the warmer climates such as Queensland and Western Australia than in the more temperate climates of New South Wales and Victoria. The main reasons are because dogs are left outside more in warmer climates to avoid heat stroke, fencing is less substantial to improve breezes and utility, and there is a vast quantity of foot traffic and wildlife on the move attracting and stimulating the outdoor dogs territorial nature- all leading to loads of nuisance barking. Perhaps nuisance barking must be experienced to be appreciated for the drain on societal health that it truly is. One dog can cause sleeplessness and anxiety for hundreds of humans. One dog can also trigger other dogs and teach them to nuisance bark.

I find electronic collars to be both humane and highly effective but have no special fondness for them. They are merely another tool.

I do not doubt the motives of those sincerely opposed to electronic collars, they are entitled to their ethical position and they must respect mine.

I sometimes wonder if their position may become more mobile if they were personally subjected to the mind-numbing toothache quality of a constant nuisance barker. To work through a list of alternative treatments takes weeks, all the while peoples health is badly affected and the dogs behaviour becomes increasingly entrenched.

Why not just start with the electronic solution, which is the most effective and humane treatment? It may be used concurrent with any other treatment. I can not agree with Simon that electronic collars should be lumped in together with surgical debarking. The two treatments affect the dog very differently. Dogs wearing the electronic bark control collars can easily have their attentions interrupted.

I have seen only two surgically debarked dogs during practice and they continue the nuisance barking habit despite the volume being turned down. The collar modifies behaviour- surgical debarking does not.